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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002633

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: JORDAN AWAITS VERDICTS IN CASES TIED TO
AL-QAI'DA/ZARQAWI NETWORK

REF: A. AMMAN 2555

[B](#). AMMAN 2594

[C](#). AMMAN 1870

Classified By: DCM David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b) (d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Jordan's high-profile prosecution of suspected terrorists linked to al-Qa'ida affiliate Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is moving forward against the backdrop of intense security operations to disrupt a plot by his associates in early April (refs a and b). A verdict is expected on April 6 in the trial of 11 men accused of assassinating USAID official Lawrence Foley. The case of Zarqawi's nephew, on trial with two others for hatching a plot against U.S. and Israeli tourists, also is wrapping up; the judge adjourned on March 22 to contemplate his verdict. Meanwhile, the prosecutor in the case of suspected Ansar al-Islam/al-Qa'ida member Ahmad al-Riyati and several cohorts called for their conviction on all counts. In all three cases, Zarqawi is being tried in absentia. While there is no definitive link between the trials and the current threat, Jordan's aggressive counterterrorism actions against Zarqawi's network, coupled with close cooperative ties with the United States, combine to make the GOJ and U.S. interests in Jordan increasingly attractive targets. End Summary.

VERDICT IN FOLEY ASSASSINATION TRIAL IMMINENT

[1](#)2. (U) The State Security Court is expected on April 6 to issue a verdict in the case of 11 men charged with the October 2002 murder of U.S. diplomat Lawrence Foley in front of his Amman home. Five of the 11 are in custody, including the alleged triggerman, Libyan national Salem Bin Suweid (ref c). Six others, including al-Qai'da affiliate and Jordanian extremist Ahmad Fadhil al-Khalaylah (aka Abu Musab al-Zarqawi) are being tried in absentia. Prosecutors say the group had been plotting attacks against U.S. and Israeli interests in Jordan since 1997, and also targeted Jordanian intelligence officers. The defendants maintain their innocence and claim they were tortured in custody, foreshadowing an almost certain appeal if found guilty.

JUDGE CONSIDERS VERDICT IN CASE AGAINST ZARQAWI'S NEPHEW

[1](#)3. (U) The attorney for three men accused of plotting against U.S. and Israeli tourists in Jordan under Zarqawi's guidance concluded his presentation on March 22 with a request that the court acquit his clients on all charges. The most prominent of the three is Omar al-Khalaylah, Zarqawi's nephew (ref c). According to the prosecution's charge sheet, Zarqawi told his nephew that the Jordanian government and its security forces were "nonbelievers" and urged him "to carry out armed operations against American and Jewish tourists" in Jordan. The attorney also contested the interrogation procedures, claiming his clients' confessions were extracted under duress. Judge Bqour adjourned the sessions indefinitely to consider his verdict in the case.

RIYATI TRIAL TO RESUME APRIL 20

[1](#)4. (U) The prosecution in the case of Jordanian national Ahmad al-Riyati, charged with belonging to the outlawed Ansar al-Islam organization and having ties to al-Qa'ida, on March 29 asked the Court to convict the defendants on all charges. The group is accused of plotting attacks against local and U.S. targets in Jordan (ref c). The court is trying 14 others in absentia, including Zarqawi and Ansar al-Islam's purported spiritual leader Mullah Krekar. However, the prosecutor informed the court that six being tried in absentia (not Zarqawi or Krekar) had died outside Jordan. Riyati has retracted his previous confessions in court claiming torture and duress while held by American and

Kurdish forces after his capture in Iraq, and by Jordanian authorities after they took custody of him last year. The court has adjourned until April 20.

COMMENT

15. (C) There is no indication at this point that Jordan's high-profile prosecution of suspected al-Qa'ida/Zarqawi affiliates is directly linked to the current threat in Amman. However, the GOJ's aggressive tactics against al-Qai'da suspects and Zarqawi's network in particular, coupled with Jordan's strong cooperative CT relationship with the United States, increases the appeal of targeting GOJ facilities and U.S. interests in Jordan. Guilty verdicts will only provide Zarqawi and his henchmen further incentive to plot more operations.

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